

CalHR 2021 Conference: Master Planning HR – Panel Bios and Resources

Panel Bios



Panel Moderator: Sarah Gessler

Chief, Workforce Development Division
California Department of Human Resources

Sarah Gessler has worked in the human resources field in both the public and private sectors for 20 years. She is the Chief of the Workforce Development Division at the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) and supports state departments with their workforce and succession planning, organizational development, and employee development and retention efforts so they can attract, develop, and retain a talented and diverse workforce. In addition to her previous role as the Statewide Workforce Planning and Recruitment Manager at CalHR, she has eleven years of experience in recruitment, examinations, classification, performance management, and training with the California Public Employees' Retirement System. Sarah is a University of California at Davis graduate and her work experience prior to starting her human resources career includes wildlife education.

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Panel Member: Russ Fong

Chief Administrative Officer
State Controller's Office

Russ Fong has served as Chief Administrative Officer at the State Controller's Office since May of 2020. He began his career 34 years ago in the financial industry before entering state service in 2000. Since that time, he has worked for the Department of Technology Services, California Public Employees' Retirement System, California High-Speed Rail Authority, and the Department of Housing and Community Development as a Deputy Director, Chief Financial Officer, Deputy Executive Officer, Assistant Executive Officer, and Division Chief. Russ has lived his entire life in the Golden State, attending C.K. McClatchy High School and the University of California, Los Angeles. He enjoys volunteering for youth sports programs and has coached high school, club, and Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) basketball over the past three decades.

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Panel Member: Cris Rojas

Deputy Executive Director, Human Resources Division
California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC)

Cris Rojas is the CPUC's Deputy Executive Director for Human Resources. She has over 33 years of civil service experience in varied aspects of government operations and administration. She is proud that she started as a volunteer for the State when she was in college at UC Davis, and quickly was hired as a student assistant. Cris obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Relations with an emphasis in Economics at UC Davis. She later obtained her Juris Doctorate and bar license and practiced employment law for 10 years. Her work experience is in program oversight and compliance in areas such as Human Resources, Equal Employment Opportunity, Business Services, Procurement and Contracts, Labor Relations, Safety, Risk Management, and Ethics. Cris is a lifelong learner and is very engaged in learning about data driven decisions and excellent leadership practices.

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Panel Member: Kathleen Webb

Chief Deputy Director
Department of Motor Vehicles

In July 2019, Kathleen Webb was appointed Chief Deputy Director of the Department of Motor Vehicles. Ms. Webb had been acting director of the Department of Motor Vehicles since January 2019. Prior to this, she served as the Director of Performance Improvement at the Government Operations Agency from 2017 to 2019, where she also served as Assistant Secretary for Innovation and Accountability from 2015 to 2017. Prior to joining the Government Operations Agency, Ms. Webb's public service experience included Chief Risk and Compliance Officer for the California Public Employee Retirement System from 2012 to 2015, Director of Policy and Risk Management from 2010 to 2012 and Chief of Strategic Planning and Policy from 2009 to 2012 for California Correctional Health Care Services, Deputy Director of the Interagency Support Division at the Department of General Services from 2008 to 2009, and Director of the Governor's Office of the Insurance Advisor from 2006 to 2008. Ms. Webb also held multiple positions with State Farm Insurance from 1986 to 2006, including agency, claims management and legislative affairs. Webb is a board member of the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) – Region 4, the California Prison Health Care Receivership and the California Prison Industry Authority. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and Women's Studies from UC Berkeley and a Charter Property & Casualty Underwriter (CPCU) professional designation.

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Resources

Planning Example Resources

[State of California Workforce Planning Model](#)

[State of California Succession Management Model](#)

[Workforce Planning Toolkit](#)

Organizational Development Example Resources

[Upward Mobility](#)

[Annual Workforce Analysis](#)

[State Leadership Accountability Act](#)

[Governance, Risk Management, and Compliance Council](#)

Workforce Development Assistance

Contact the CalHR Statewide Workforce Planning Unit: wfp@calhr.ca.gov